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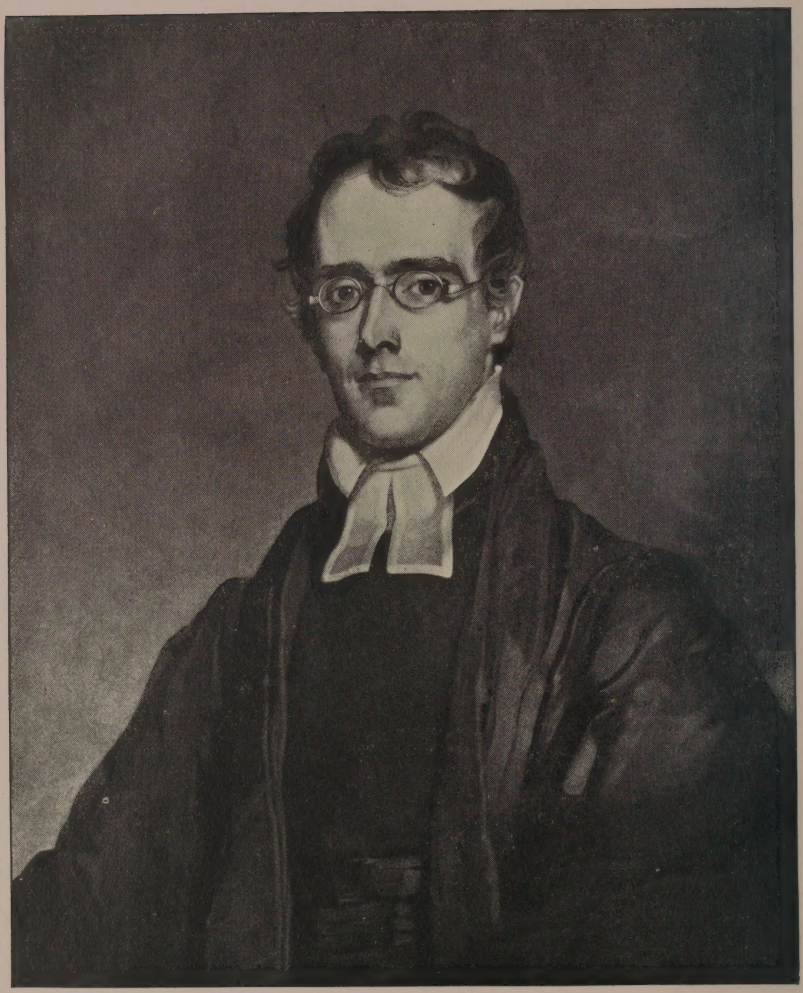

Rev. James Montgomery, D. D.

MEMOIR

of

The Rev. James Montgomery, D. D.

By

The Rev. S. F. Hotchkin

Registrar of the Diocese of Pennsylvania

Author of

"The Mornings of the Bible," "Early Clergy of Pennsylvania and Delaware,"
"History of Germantown," "Dark Care Lightened,"
"The Living Saviour," etc., etc.

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REV. JAMES MONTGOMERY, D. D.

GEIKIE, in his Life of Christ, writes: "Every Hebrew child heard, from his earliest years, how the finger of God Himself had written on the tables of stone, 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'"

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Irenaeus Prime's Letters contain the following lines: "Through life the approbation of my parents has been one of the highest incentives to energetic effort. Next to the love of God I think I have prized it above all other rewards of diligence and success."

If the remembered smile or commendation of a pious father may affect a son's action when grey hairs are on his head, is it not well to consider also the fathers of the fathers, and reflect how they have handed down the richest blessing of the Christian religion for generations?

Men occupy houses and lands of their forefathers, and should sometimes think of the greater benefits inherited from them, and hope to meet those in Heaven whom they never saw on earth.

The *Annals* of the laborious Dr. Sprague give an account of Dr. Montgomery, which I condensed in my *Early Clergy of Pennsylvania and Delaware*, pp. 276–280, and now further abbreviate. *The Missionary*, in A. D., 1834, and a touching letter of Bishop G. W. Doane, completed the narrative.

Dr. James Montgomery's life was a beautiful exemplification of practical Christianity. He was pre-eminently a peacemaker, and secured the Master's blessing for that Christ-like work. The sweet words of the Son of God resound from the Mount of Beatitudes through the ages: "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." In the midst of mad cries for armies and navies,

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and for the blood of our fellow-men, children of the same Heavenly Father, and redeemed by the same blessed "Prince of Peace," would that individuals and nations could hear the divine command, "Peace, be still," and strive to emulate each other in tilling the olives of peace, rather than framing fierce and bloody instruments of war to destroy God's images in their fellow-men, and to move the wails of widows and orphans for a generation.

Our good doctor's life was worn out in Christian labor; and his forcible preaching strained a body feeble but almost bursting with its divine message, as he lured men heavenward with the angelic tidings of God's good will.

While he was very devout, he was humorous in his disposition, and cheerfulness belongs to good men, as the evil cannot honestly be joyous.

His father's death when he was but five years old left him without his care and protection, but a loving mother guided his early years.

The following is from Dr. Sprague's *Annals of the Episcopal Pulpit:*

James Montgomery was born in Philadelphia, November 25, 1787. In the early part of the eighteenth century, his ancestor, William Montgomerie, emigrated from Ayrshire, Scotland (where the family had lived for many generations, and where the collateral branch of it still resides), and settled in East Jersey. His father, John Montgomery, a native of Monmouth County, N. J., and a merchant of Philadelphia, died in that city in 1794, from a disease which was contracted by his exposure as a member of the Philadelphia City Troop during the War of the Revolution. His mother, whose maiden name was Mary Crathorne, and who was maternally descended from the early Swedish settlers on the Delaware, survived her husband more than half a century, dying in 1848, at the age of eighty-three.

The subject of this notice was the second of a family of three boys. A part of his early education was obtained at Dr. Hall's school in Harford County, Maryland, and at the well-known Grammar School of Princeton, N. J. In 1805, he was graduated at

Princeton College. On his return home he entered the office of Judge Hopkinson, of Philadelphia, and was in due time admitted to the bar. After practising as a lawyer for several years, he became a candidate for Holy Orders in the Church, and was ordained Deacon by Bishop White, in Philadelphia, on 25th of August, 1816. Having been elected Rector of St. Michael's Church, Trenton, N. J., he was ordained Priest by Bishop Croes, October 7, 1817. In April, 1818, he removed to New York, having been elected Rector of Grace Church in that city. In 1820 he resigned this rectorship, and returned to his native State, residing near Philadelphia and officiating in some of the vacant churches in that vicinity, and was for a time rector of St. Mark's Church, Mantua; and it was during this rectorate he preached the sermon, *The Grounds of the Christian's Love for the Church*, before the Annual Convention of the Diocese in 1822, held in St. Peter's Church. Eventually the formation by many of his friends and in his interest of the new Parish of St. Stephen's was accomplished, to the rectorship of which he was elected, at the age of thirty-three. The church was consecrated on the 27th of February, 1823, by Bishop White, the consecration sermon being preached by his early and steadfast friend Bishop Hobart, which was subsequently published. He was distinguished throughout his whole course for his earnest devotion to the interests of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and in turn was honored by several of the more important offices within her gift. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, which he represented in the General Convention at the sessions of 1826, 1829 and 1832. He was also a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, and a Trustee of the General Theological Seminary from 1823 up to his death. He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Geneva College in 1827.

While he was actively engaged in the discharge of his various public and private duties, a pulmonary disease began to develop itself, which, after a comparatively brief course, terminated his life. For several weeks he had suffered from a severe cold and oppression of the chest, which gave much anxiety to his family and friends, and to which he was repeatedly urged to pay proper attention. But his duties were pressing, and he could not be prevailed

on to intermit them, even temporarily. He had lately commenced a week-day course of lectures on the Epistle to the Romans; and this formed an addition to his labors for which he was ill prepared. On the last Sunday of the year (1833) he preached with a degree of earnestness and solemnity which could not fail to be particularly noticed by his hearers. The next day he was occupied in pastoral duty, and the day following that, was attacked with a hemorrhage of the lungs. He was aware at once that his case was an alarming one, but he expressed the utmost resignation to the Divine will, and a desire to illustrate by his own example the sustaining power of those truths which he had preached to others. Afterwards he became more hopeful of his recovery, and seemed impressed with the belief that the work which God had designed for him was not yet accomplished. It was not long, however, before a more decisive change left him with no doubt that his course was nearly run. He lingered till the 17th of March, 1834, and then passed away so gently that it was scarcely possible to note distinctly the moment of his departure.

Among Dr. Montgomery's publications are the following: A Sermon on *Religious Education*, 1826; a Sermon on *The Missionary Enterprise* (published in the *American Pulpit*), 1831; a Sermon on the *Service of the Church* (published in the *Protestant Episcopal Pulpit*), 1834; Two Sermons on the *Close of the Year*, and of the *Spiritual Crucifixion and the Spiritual Life* (the last sermon that he preached) 1834, and others.

Dr. Montgomery was twice married. His first wife, Eliza Dennis Teackle, daughter of John Teackle, Esq., died in 1823, having three children. The eldest, and survivor of these, was John Teackle, a practising lawer in Philadelphia, who died February 20, 1895. His second wife was Mary Harrison, daughter of Thomas H. White, Esq., of Philadelphia, and granddaughter of the venerable Bishop White. Of four children by this marriage, but one survives. One of these, William White, was graduated at the University of Pennsylvania in 1847, followed his father into the ministry of the Church, being ordained in St. Stephen's Church, by Bishop Alonzo Potter September 12, 1852, and while rector of St. Thomas' Church, Mamaroneck, New York, there died December 28, 1889, leaving one surviving son, James Henry Montgomery, M. D., of Erie, Pennsylvania.

We resume our narrative.

The young man whose life we are following chose law as his profession and pursued with success its practice for nigh five years, being admitted to the Philadelphia Bar June 3, 1811; but perhaps he could have echoed Herbert's words in his poem, "Affliction," reflecting on God's Providence:

"Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
The way that takes the town;
Thou did'st betray me with a ling'ring book,
And wrap me in a gown.
I was entangled in a world of strife,
Before I had the power to change my life."

* * * * * *

"Well, I will change my service, and go seek
Some other master out,
Ah, my dear God! though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love Thee, if I love Thee not."

According to Dr. Batterson's useful volume, *The Amerian Episcopate*, the following bishops were lawyers: Madison, Ravenscroft, Elliott, McCoskry, Alfred Lee, W. J. Boone, Kip, Gregg, Welles, Watson, Adams, Harris and Galleher.

Dr. Montgomery's last residence and where he died, was at No. 917 Spruce Street, a building so altered, however, in a later reconstruction as to be practically a different building.

His surviving son, in early childhood, recollects how he was accustomed to walk with his father from this abode to St. Stephen's Church, who was robed in his black silk gown.

Dr. Jenney and other clergy also walked from the old Christ Church Rectory, a few steps from the church, at Ledger Place and Lagrange Street, in their vestments, across the grass to the sacred edifice (See my *Early Clergy*, page 118). As late as Dr. Ducachet's time, he was accustomed to pass through the streets in his black gown to church.

On May 30, A. D. 1822, Bishop White laid the corner-stone of St. Stephen's Church, an organization effected by Dr. Montgomery's friends, who desired a new church in the

"Western" part of the city, and one of the first meetings to consider which, was held at the residence of Joseph Sims, Esq., at Ninth and Chestnut Streets, an estate which subsequently came to the possession in part of St. Stephen's Church under the will of Mrs. Burd, the niece of Mr. Sims. The building was first erected by the Methodists, but was enlarged after its purchase by the new congregation, according to the plans of William Strickland the accomplished architect who thus designed the first so-called Gothic church in Philadelphia.

The zealous and loving pastor of the new St. Stephen's met with success, which follows earnest conviction of truth, making good his last words: "I die as I have lived, in the faith of Jesus Christ."

The parish at once rose to prominence, and grew steadily through this rectorship. The debt was reduced, and a new organ built, and this became one of the foremost parishes in the city during the life of its first rector.

It is pleasant to trace the streams of sacred influence of this parish back to the days of Christ's faithful soldier and servant in an earlier day. Others lay foundations on which the present generation build, and the true corner-stone, Jesus Christ, must ever be at the base, while God the Father, and God the Son grant the constant aid of the Holy Spirit in raising the spiritual stone—the living temple of pastors and people, who send forth "the praises of Israel," which is the true tabernacle inhabited by God. Material churches rise and decay and fall, but houses not made with hands are eternal in the heavens.

That Dr. Montgomery's work was known outside of Philadelphia is evinced by the interest in him shown by the noble first Bishop of Tennessee. I have written as follows in my *Memoir of Bishop Otey*, p. 9: "Bishop Otey also saw the devoted Dr. James Montgomery, Rector of St. Stephen's Church, on his death-bed, resigned and peaceful, and full of love to the Church of Christ. He affectionately grasped the

hand of his brother of Tennessee, and "kindled with animation at the name of Ravenscroft, and exhorted me to follow in the steps of that great and good man."

A time-stained extract from *The National Gazette*, Philadelphia, February 9, 1833, notices the request of the Managers of the Philadelphia Institute as about to be complied with by a sermon to the young men of the Institute at St. Stephen's on the next Sunday evening. There is an invitation to the young men of the city in general to attend, and the lower part of the church was to be reserved for them. The signatures of the Committee of Arrangements will call up old names: Matthew L. Bevan, Matthew Newkirk, Robert Earp, Samuel Richards, A. G. Coffin, Dr. L. P. Gebhard.

St. Stephen's Church has ever had a decent and orderly service. Its first rector, in a printed sermon, wrote concerning the Liturgy: "In the purity and scriptural simplicity of its doctrines, we recognize a strong claim upon our attachment. Speaking the very language of inspiration, and expressing the simple and essential verities of the gospel, in a language at once forcible, appropriate, perspicuous and devoted; embodying those very forms of sound words, which even in apostolic times and by apostolic sanction regulated the faith and guided the devotions of primitive piety; animated and kindling with those very supplications and praises which glowed upon the lips, and burst from the hearts of a Chrysostom, a Basil, a Tertullian and an Ambrose; exhibiting in short, a synopsis of the faith and devotion of the best and purest ages of the Church."

In another printed discourse on *The Decency and Order of Divine Worship*, he advocates "the devout union of minister and people in the prayers and praises of the sanctuary," as in the most ancient times, when the "worshippers were not mute spectators and listeners," but the audible responses gave solemnity to the worship, and praise kindled sacred love into a glow. Such united devotion he urged would have an impressive and edifying effect. Private prayer

before service is recommended to tune the heart to God's praise, and a *solemn pause* after the blessing to gain a heavenly influence.

Another printed sermon on *The Missionary Enterprise*, notes the vast number of heathen, and the Christian's duty towards them, showing how the primitive Christians valued the Gospel, while "degraded and benighted *Africa*," brings out a special plea from the man of God. He speaks of the nursing care of the English Church in this new land. Dr. Wm. Croswell's "Missionary Hymn," on Africa is printed at the end of the sermon. It begins:

"When shall thy centre opened be?
When shall the veil that lay
Upon the land of mystery
So long be torn away?
When shall the hallowed cross be seen
Far in those sunny tracts,
Beyond the lofty mountain screen
And thundering cataracts?".

The last two sermons preached by Dr. Montgomery were printed. On the last Sunday morning of 1833 he preached on the *Close of the Year*, from Ps. xc, 9, "We spend our years as a tale that is told." He dwells on the brevity and sudden ending of the brief tale of human life, and marks that the end of life is "to make us *wise unto salvation*," and questions his hearers as to whether they have made that the business of their lives, pushing earnestly the query as to their prospect for a future life and preparation for death.

In the evening of that day so memorable to himself, his family, and his flock, his discourse was on *The Spiritual Crucifixion and the Spiritual Life*. The text was Gal. 2: 20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." From these burning words of St. Paul he pleads the power of Christ's Atonement and precious

blood-shedding on the cross, as paying the debt of sin for believers. He urges the acquisition of the most precious treasure of the Spirit of Christ, and the bringing forth of its fruits.

Thus this saintly man ripened for Heaven, with a swan-like dying song on his lips, like that of St. Simeon before his peaceful departure for the higher world of glory.

Bishop G. W. Doane's Memoir in Dr. Sprague's *Annals* relates the remarkable closing scene. A cold produced hemorrhage of the lungs, and human skill and love could not detain the spirit longing to be free. The dying clergyman knew that death might be near, but was resigned to the will of God, and practised what he had preached, as he expressed it. For a time he thought he might revive to continue his loved work for God more faithfully, saying his first text would be, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Bishop Doane was sent for when his friend was dying, and saw a scene to delight angels, as the man of God lay on his death-bed, holding his beloved prayer book. His countenance was peaceful and joyful as he welcomed the Bishop, and declared himself "perfectly happy." His wife and family were present, and prayers and hymns were brightening the sick room with a heavenly glow. As the wife, trembling with emotion, at her husband's request, read "Welcome, Sweet Day of Rest," the dying man replied: "Yes, welcome, welcome, blessed day of peace and rest, and holy joy." He continued to comment on each line, as he thought of Christ rising from the tomb to be the light and glory of the world, and to revive the hearts of the faithful with hope, and rejoice their eyes. He prayed to the "Blessed Jesus," that He would bring all who did not know Him "into the splendid circle of Thy glory." His pathetic fervors surpassed description. "Another six days' work is done," was read, and thus commented on. He then read it to himself, and sang it low, but clearly, asking the Bishop to join him in the Doxology, and to give the blessing, to which he responded, "Amen, Amen." He called on the Bishop to bear witness that he died "in the faith of the Lord

Jesus Christ," putting his "trust for pardon" in His merits and death. He acknowledged his sinfulness, but declared that he was set upon the "Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ," to whom all must come for salvation. He asked to receive the Holy Communion, which was administered that day to him by Bishop Onderdonk. He fervently received the broken body and shed blood of Christ, saying that he then "discerned the Lord's body" as never before, and confided as truly in his Saviour as if he "saw Him in His glory." As he grew weaker, he continued singing hymns, until the faltering tongue refused its office here, waiting to resume it in Paradise. At last the moans ceased, and painlessly he closed his earthly journey. A prayer arose in the chamber of death for comfort to the toilers left in this world of disappointment and separation. The sacred Lord's Day had just passed into the morning of the following day when the relief came, but the freed spirit was learning that "There remaineth, therefore, a rest, (literally a Sabbath-keeping), to the people of God." Heb., 4, 9.

The Rev. William Croswell wrote the following lines on the death of his friend :

"My brother, I have read
Of holy men, in Christ who fell asleep,
For whom no bitter tears where shed—
I could not weep."

"And thou thyself art one,
O man of loves, and truth without alloy!
The Master calleth, and thy work well done,
Enter thy joy."

"To such as thee belong
The harmonies in which all Heaven unite,
To share the 'inexpressive nuptial song,'
And walk in white."

"And oh! thy church, thy home,
Thy widow'd home! who shall forbid to grieve?
How may they hear the desolating gloom
Such partings leave?"

"Great Shepherd of the flock!
Even Thou whose life was given for the sheep,
Sustain them in the overwhelming shock,
And safely keep."

Bishop Doane describes him as a ripe scholar and wise in the knowledge of men, being both contemplative and active. His early companions revered him in the ministry. He was a good citizen, neighbor and friend, cheerful, accessible and even playful with those he loved, which indicated a peaceful mind. He was ready to serve all with counsel and purse. To the suffering in mind or body he was gentle and prudently helpful. His delicate candor gave him a wide influence, and he almost made himself one with those in temptation that he might extricate them. The sick and sorrowful looked to him for comfort and sympathy, and did not look in vain. As a minister of Christ's Church his love for souls was visible to all. He strove to impart to others with ardor the religious faith which had blessed his own life, by the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, for he did not magnify himself.

Dr. Montgomery called " the sacred triad of principles," Gospel truth, in the Gospel church, producing Gospel fruits.

The Rev. Dr. George Boyd, the faithful Rector of old St. John's Church, Philadelphia, and an early advocate of free churches, wrote an obituary of Dr. Montgomery in *The Churchman*, describing his funeral and deploring his loss. He says: " I have just returned from attending the funeral of our departed brother, Dr. Montgomery. His remains were removed from his late dwelling-house, at 4 o'clock this afternoon, attended by about thirty of his clerical friends, and a very large concourse of mourning friends. The service in the church and at the grave was performed by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Onderdonk, who is expected on the next Lord's Day to preach a funeral sermon. Bishop White walked with the family as a mourner. St. Stephen's was crowded with a weeping congregation, and his remains were interred in the yard adjoining the church. * * * The loss of our brother will be deeply felt by the brethren in New York, where he was well known and his character duly appreciated. May they, with us, and all the servants of CHRIST who knew him, learn from this dispensation, to be 'pure in heart', 'merciful' to one another's failings;

'peace makers' in the household of faith, and zealous in the Master's service, as the lamented Montgomery was."

The West Chester Democrat contained a sketch referring to a sermon delivered by him, impressing a crowded audience in the Court House in that town; this was in the summer of 1833, five years prior to the incorporation of Holy Trinity Church in that borough; and an eminent lawyer of that place, now also gone to his rest, has recounted to his son his vivid recollections of the visit of Dr. Montgomery and his wife to West Chester on that occasion. Much of this missionary work was undertaken by him, for we find him preaching often at Germantown, his earliest there being in 1816, when the young congregation of St. Luke's was yet worshipping in a house; at Oxford; at Bristol; at Reading; at Newark; at Mount Holly; at Red Hook; at New Castle; at Easton; at Hamiltonville, to the early congregation a few weeks before his fatal illness; and at Carlisle, where he preached several times in February, 1832, while visiting his friend, the Rev. Dr. Hare, then rector of St. John's.

Mrs. Thomas Smith wrote a poem on his death, closing thus:

"Could we have caught the mantle ere it fell,
With a small portion of thy chasten'd fire,
Our bounding hearts with gratitude would swell,
And pious feeling never could expire.

"But let us hope, altho' thy form hath fled,
Thy pure example that was kindly given,
May o'er the flock its virtuous influence shed,
And draw their thoughts and blessings up to Heaven."

The Rev. J. W. Curtis, who survived him but a year, contributed some verses in the New York *Commercial Advertiser*, of April 15, 1834, which were afterwards published in his collected poems, New York, in 1846, to his memory, in which occur the lines:

Montgomery! thou best of friends,
Warm hearted, kind, and all sincere;
Thy soul disdained all selfish ends,
And held e'en foes as brethren dear.

In after years the Rev. Prof. Haight, of the General Theological Seminary, described to his sons his boyish recollections of Dr. Montgomery's first sermon as Rector of Grace Church, New York, about working while it is day. He was struck with the preacher's appearance and earnestness. The boy was catechized with others by the new rector at the chancel, and much impressed by his voice and manner and grave seriousness. After service he gave the boy a pat on the head, little thinking that he was to be a theological professor. He was kind to the young. Dr. Haight recalled his religious service with his mother, detained at home by illness. In after years scholar and pastor became warm friends. Dr. Haight further paints this Christian gentleman as fearless in fulfilling duty.

A mural tablet in memory of Dr. Montgomery was placed in St. Stephen's Church, which was designed by Mr. Strickland, in conformity to the general design of the church, and the inscription was written by Bishop Doane.

In 1866 the bodies of Dr. Montgomery and his wife, Mary Harrison Montgomery, were removed from St. Stephen's Churchyard to the Cemetery of St. James the Less.

The picture, which illustrates this memoir, was engraved by John Sartain, from the original portrait by Thomas Sully, now in possession of his grandson, Dr. Montgomery.

Two of Dr. Montgomery's grandsons are in Holy Orders: the Rev. James Alan Montgomery, of St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia, and on the staff of *The Church Standard;* and the Rev. S. G. M. Montgomery, Associate Rector of St. Luke's Church, Kearney, Nebraska. The late Rev. Henry Eglinton Montgomery, D. D., Rector of the Church of the Incarnation, New York, who died in 1874, was his nephew. Of Dr. Montgomery's later kin in holy orders beyond the sea, we note Right Reverend Henry H. Montgomery, Bishop of Tasmania, and also the late Rev. Dr. James F. Montgomery, Dean of Edinburgh, who died in 1898.

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